



By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Liberal had big leads late in two games with Hugoton Thursday, and both times the Lady Eagles were able to take leads late. Liberal could not overcome the rally in one game, but they did in another to split the two-game set.

Liberal jumped ahead of Hugoton 3-1 in the fourth inning of Game 1, and by the sixth inning the Lady Redskins had a 5-1 lead.

But Hugoton was able to push six runs across in the top of the sixth and two more in the seventh for a 9-5 win.

In Game 2, Hugoton scored four runs in the top of the first while freshman Brittney Granger settled in on the mound for the Lady Redskins.

Liberal battled back to tie the game in the third and took an 8-4 lead in the fourth.

Hugoton tied the game in the top of the fifth, but Liberal added a run in the bottom of the inning and added another in the sixth to take a 10-8 lead.

But Hugoton pushed three more runs across on the top of the seventh to take an 11-10 lead. Liberal had two chances to get outs at first but instead tried to make plays at home. Both runners were safe and Hugoton was able to take a lead.

Liberal was able to get a base runner to lead off the seventh, and Cynthia Cisneros used a bunt single to move the runner to third.

Another hit allowed the tying run to score, and Cisneros advanced to second.

The Hugoton pitcher missed a ball from her catcher, and Cisneros streaked for third. Hugoton attempted throw her out on the steal, but the throw sailed by the third baseman, and Cisneros headed home to score the winning run.

Riley Hay was hit in the foot with a line drive early in the game and started 0-for-2 at the plate but ended with back-to-back triples while hobbling from base to base in the victory.

“A win is a win,” Liberal coach Pat Knott said. “We have three ugly wins. We have to learn how to shut an inning down. We have to make some plays.”

The plays that allowed Hugoton to take the lead were moments that Knott said will be reviewed.

“We have enough experience,” he said. “We always say, ‘When in doubt, get the out.’ We will go back over it. We cover that enough. The pressure might be there.”

Knott was impressed with Hay after getting hit to stay in the game, make plays at second, and

hit two triples.

“I didnt know if ‘Hoppy’ would get around to three,” he said. “It was a gutty performance.”

Liberal will play Scott City April 5.